

W. A. GUSTY.

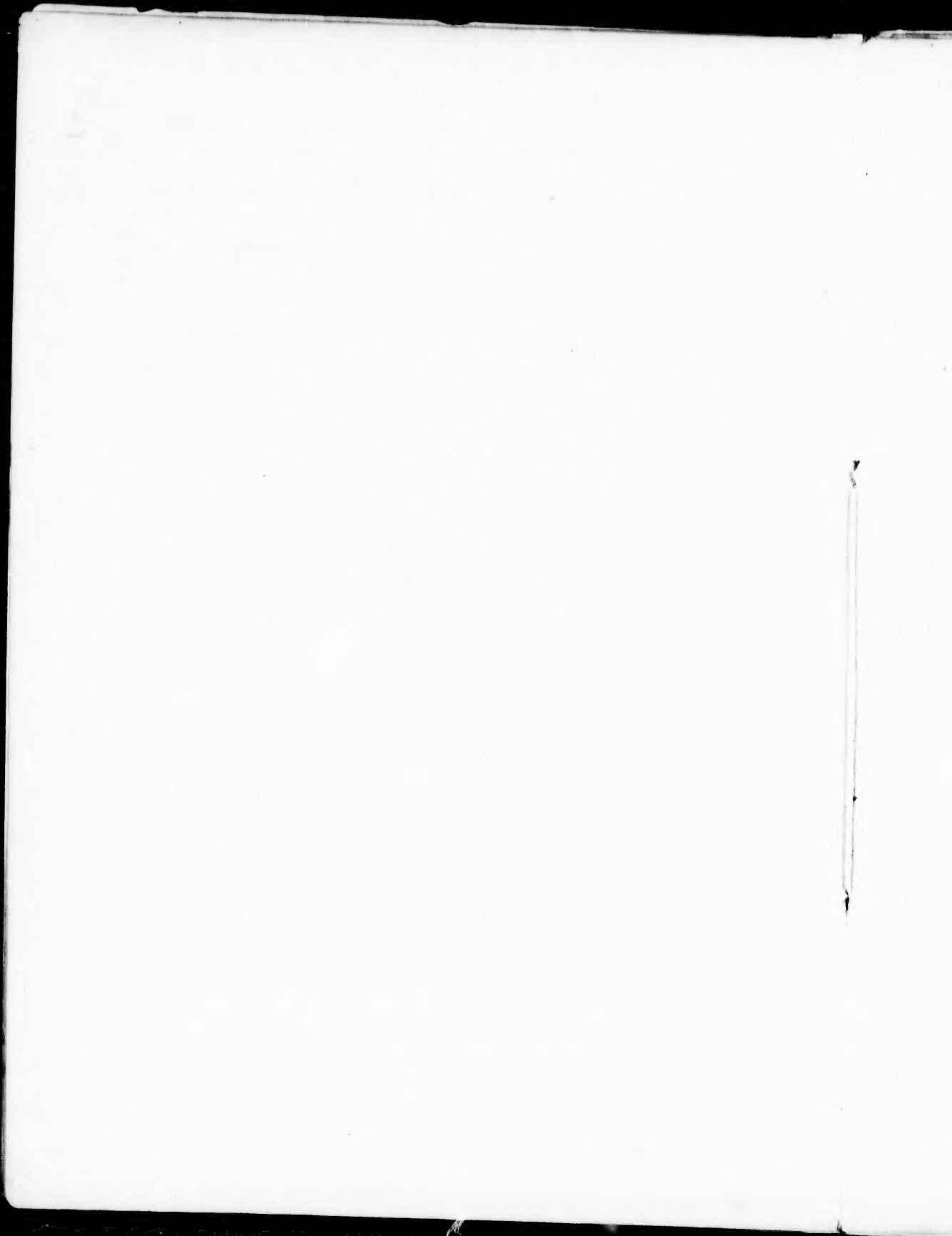
THE NORTH-WEST TERRITORY

Not in Peel  
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H R Batten Pool Esq,  
with the Compliments of  
the Author



••• TWO YEARS •••

IN

MANITOBA AND THE  
NORTH-WEST TERRITORY.

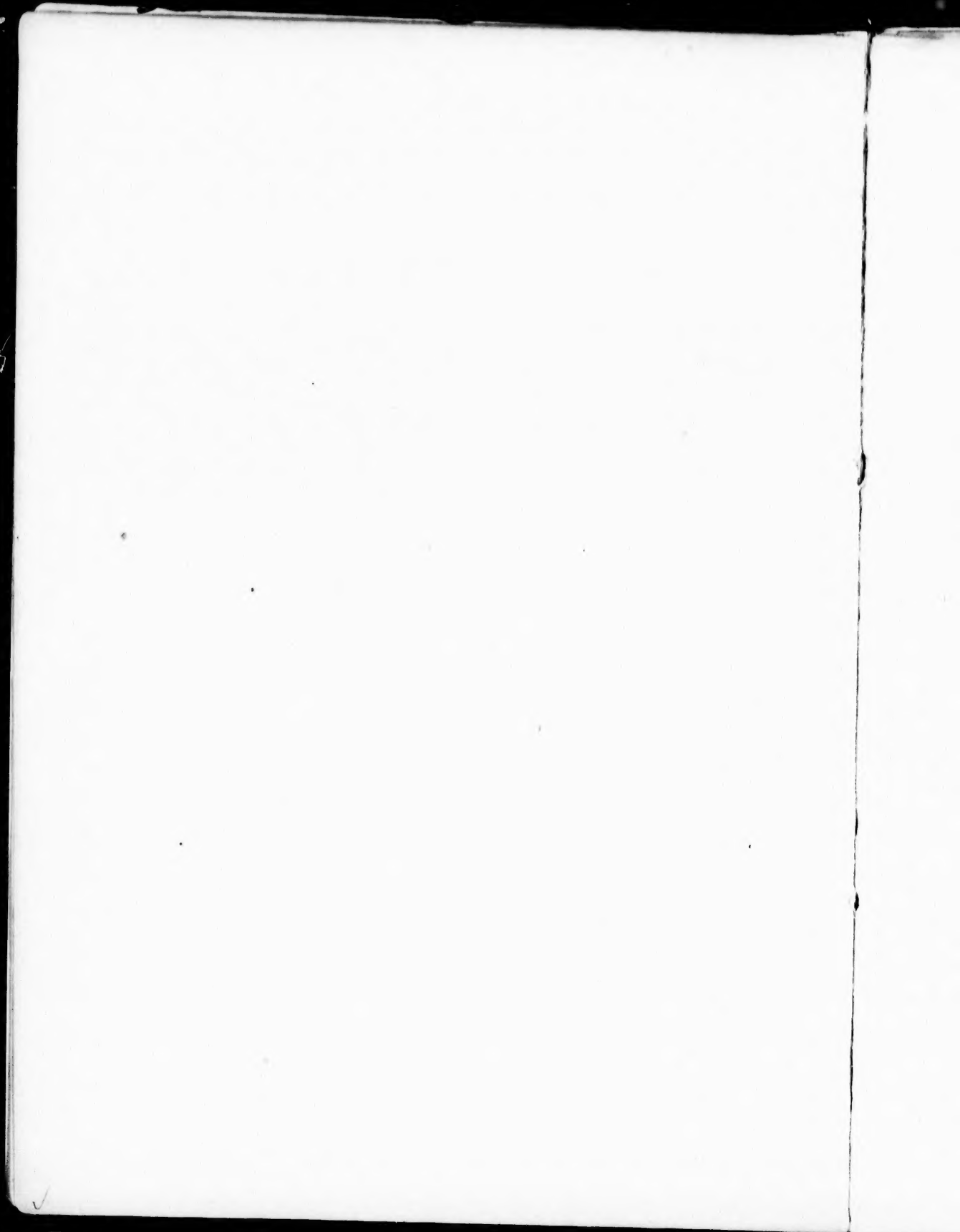
BY

H. A. MCGUSTY.

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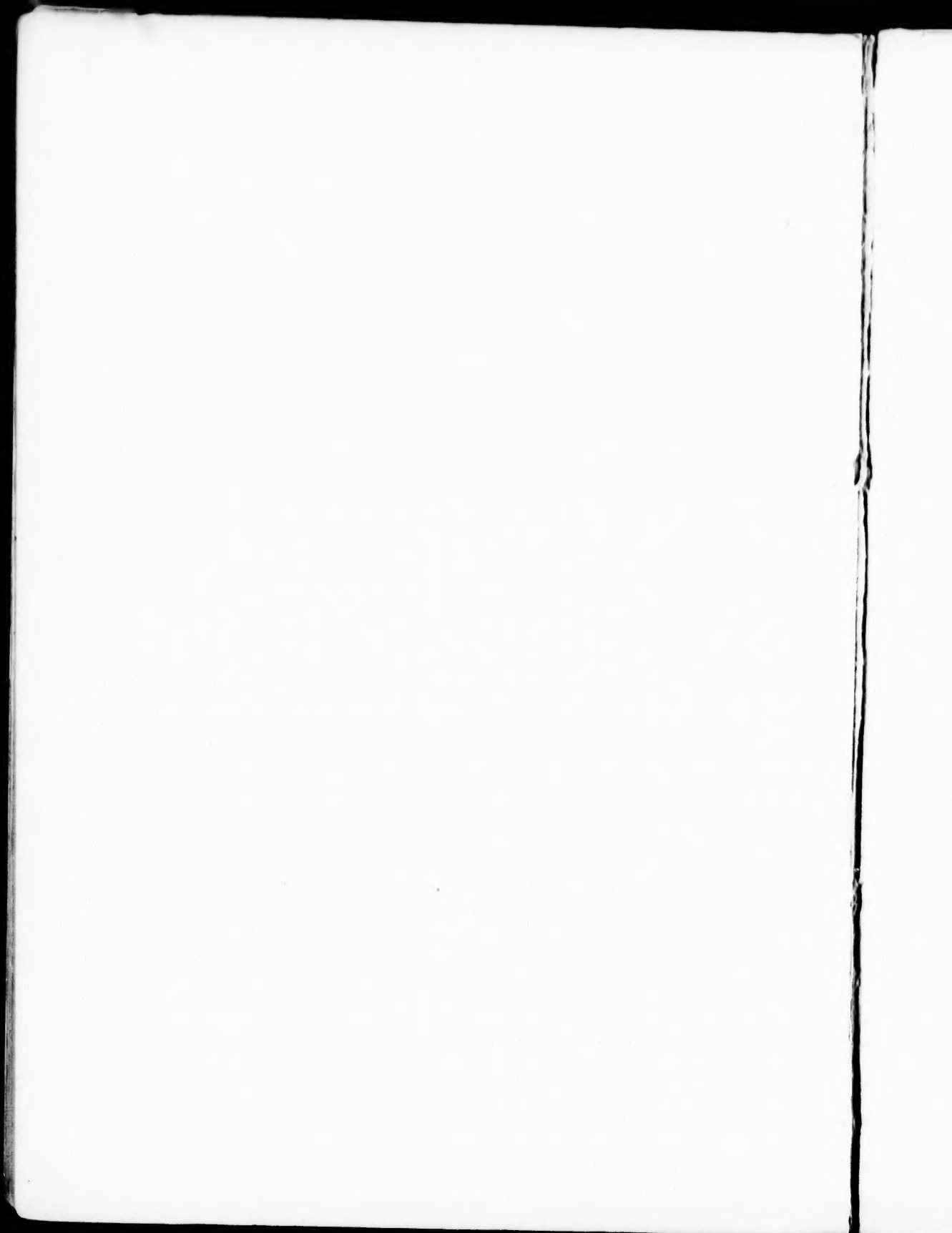


## PREFACE.

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SEVERAL people have remonstrated with me concerning the swearing implied by the blank spaces in this sketch. To these good people I wish to remark that I have tried to describe the North-West as it is, not as it should be. I was not consulted as to the formation of the morals and manners of that country, nor as to the implanting of that sinful nature in the breasts of the cattle which is, I believe, the real cause of the swearing.

I verily believe that were St. Anthony himself placed upon a half-broken young horse, and told to drive some half-dozen yearling heifers, whose firm determination was to travel as fast as they possibly could, in exactly the direction they were not wanted to go, and at the same time to separate as much as possible, I repeat that were St. Anthony placed in that position, he would, I firmly believe swear until he started a prairie fire, and I am quite certain that if he did not do so he would burst a blood-vessel. For the benefit of those who may not know the innocence and purity of my language, I must remark that I *never* swear myself. Still, some allowance should be made for those who do so under extreme provocation. Swearing is a safety valve which has saved many a hot-tempered man from insanity.







TWO YEARS  
IN  
➤ Manitoba and the North-west Territory. ◀

INTRODUCTION.

I **ORIGINALLY** wrote this short account of my experiences in Manitoba and the North West in order to show my friends and relations the sort of life we lead in that Colony.

I publish it in the hope that it may prove of some slight interest to young men of my own age and station who are thinking of emigrating to Canada. I, myself, was educated at Rugby, with the intention of entering the army, then, after having read for that profession for a few months, and having determined on emigration, I went to an agricultural college where I learnt many things which *ought* to have proved useful.

It is, of course, very hard for young fellows in this country to know exactly what to do if they have no friends already settled out there, and so I will try and give them the benefit of my slight experience.

In the first place, *do not* go out as *pupils* to farmers out there. I do not want to say anything against the people who take pupils; but it is certainly not the sort of thing I should do myself.

I should advise any one going out to go to their destination, wherever it may be, and to arrive there with a little money in their pockets, and I should be greatly surprised if they cannot find some young Englishman of their own position who will be only too glad to let them camp with him, on

their paying shares in the expenses, which will on the average, come to perhaps three dollars a week.

Even if they can't find a ranch willing to take them in, they can board at the best hotel in Calgary for a dollar-and-a-half a day, until they can get work somewhere, and even that I think would pay better than paying a large premium.

In regard to what outfit to take out. I should advise you to take merely a few good English cloth suits, in fact very much the same kind of outfit that you would take were you going to live in the country in England; the things best suited to the country you can naturally get in the country. The only things I would bring besides ordinary clothes would be some blankets. Strange to say there are such things as shops in America, only they call them stores. I should also bring out a good English shot-gun, and I should recommend the old-fashioned under lever action as it is not so likely to get out of order.

The best kind of rifle is, I think, the Winchester repeater, which you can get cheaper out in Canada; a rifle, however, is not really essential. The best kind of revolver for the prairie is the Colt "Frontier six-shooter," with a long barrel taking the 44 cal. cartridge.

Of course, I do not recommend you not to take out a regular outfit, such as the average young Englishman brings out, if you get it for nothing. Most of the articles come in handy for something or other; though I don't know if they are as handy as the money itself.

I don't think I should recommend any one to go out under the age of eighteen—that was the age at which I myself went out—unless they are going with or to some one else.

As regards what to learn before going out: if over the age of eighteen, I should not recommend you to waste any time, but just start out, you can learn what is necessary to run a ranch best on the ranch.

For instance, I, myself, learnt to shoe horses before going out. When I got there, I found that it is very seldom a horse is shod on the prairie. Still, it may be useful for me sometimes to know a little blacksmithing. And certainly if not going to start for the Colonies for some time, I should recommend you to learn all you can in the way of outdoor work, and I do not know of any better place to learn this than the Colonial College, Holesly Bay, Suffolk, where I spent a few terms. Another advantage in these agricultural colleges is, that whilst there you are with a lot of fellows who are going out to some of the colonies, and whom you are

always liable to meet in after years, for the colonies, at least the ones I know, though immense in acreage are small in population. Then there is always the chance of meeting some one there who will be willing to go out with you, and it is always far pleasanter if you can get a "pal" to go out with. There is one thing I must warn you about, and that is, that in the colonies "Jack is as good as his master, and usually a darned sight better," and out there you must address people whom in England you would probably consider your inferiors as equals, as it is no uncommon circumstance to find that the boots in the hotel, or the ostler in a livery stable is a gentleman and public school man.

You must also be careful about the confidence trick, as you are almost certain to meet some one who will try and swindle you. But you are much less liable to this kind of thing if two people are travelling together.

In order to show you how they run this kind of racket, I will tell you what happened to myself in New York on the way home. I was walking down 14th Street by myself when an elderly very respectably dressed gentleman accosted me and asked me how I was. I said, I had never felt better, and hoped he was well. I then went into a "dime museum" as I had never seen one, he followed; and as I had nothing to do I talked with him. He then told me that he was manager of Senator Somebody's property, and that they were importing a valuable trotting stallion to England, and that they were very much puzzled to know who to get to look after him on the passage, or rather to look after the man who was taking him over, and he offered to pay my expenses if I would look after him. I could not see what he was driving at, so I said it would suit me splendidly. He then proposed that we should go down and see the horse. I agreed. So we went down to a livery stable, where we met another young man, whom he introduced as the lawyer of the Senator's property; he then said he would go over and fetch the key and he went out. The lawyer said that the Senator was dead, and that he was looking after his property for the widow. While we were talking, another man came in, who said he was a horse dealer, and who wanted to know if he could have the horse. The lawyer said that he was very sorry that he could not; but that the widow refused to sell it to a horse dealer. The dealer then told me that he wanted to buy a small horse, and he pointed one out to me for four hundred dollars. He then went away, but came back, asked whether if he got someone else to buy the horses it would be all right. The lawyer said,

certainly. He then asked me to buy it for him. I said that if he would give me the money, I would hand it over if the lawyer would give me the bill of sale. The lawyer, however, said that he could not agree to that as it would not be a *bona fide* sale. I would not agree to anything else and said I had no money. I then told them to send to my hotel if they wanted me to take over their stallion, and, of course, I never heard any more of that gang.

In conclusion I must say that I like the life out there very much, and intend returning next spring. Still, I should not advise anyone to give up any employment they have in England to go out there, neither should I advise anyone who is at all delicate to emigrate.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE VOYAGE.

ONE foggy March morning, in the year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty-nine, having determined on emigration, I sailed for Manitoba in the Allan liner S.S. *Peruvian*.

Readers (gentle or otherwise), I do not set up to be a good sailor; but I record it with pride that I was not sea-sick until we were well out of the river, and then it was merely a slight indisposition. I managed to go in to dinner, where I met two very nice fellows, T— and W—, both of whom had been out in Canada before.

After dinner we went down to inspect "Mars," a brown retriever that I was bringing out.

Next morning we arrived at Merville, where I was joined by my friend C—, who was coming out with me.

In a few minutes the tender had left us, and we steamed away. In a few more hours we had left Ireland behind, the last land we saw being two pointed rocks, about 10 yards

wide and fifty feet high, standing about a mile apart. C— jokingly proposed that we should land and colonize them. In a few short hours we were wishing we had landed; indeed, we would have been perfectly willing to get out and colonize the Atlantic itself, the only thing that stopped us being the fact that we were in our cabin and too weak to get up on deck; so had to content ourselves with wishing for the sinking of the ship.

But in a few days, and a few days did not much matter, as the voyage was the longest on record except one, the exception being that historical passage of Columbus, we were able to take part in the amusements and excitements of our fellow passengers. The amusements and excitements were as follows:—

Breakfast; then crawled round on deck for an hour or so; then went into the saloon and read a book; then lunch; then another crawl, etc. Dinner; and then went into smoking-room and listened to the people who "had been there" telling lies. The lies were well worth listening to, especially the hunting lies, usually told by some miserable little sinner who had spectacles or consumption, and who was born in London and had never been farther or in a wilder spot than Montreal. They (the lies) were exciting—not very consistent perhaps; but after all we did not pay anything, so had no right to complain.

T— caused some amusement by arguing. He would argue on any subject; but his favourite one was running down Manitoba, where he had a farm. Still, he was perfectly willing to turn round and praise it, if any one else tried to run it down, and the funny thing was that he always got the best of it.

However, the longest lane must have a turning, and we finally arrived at Halifax.

After having had our baggage inspected by the Customs House officers, we embarked on the Intercolonial Railway. The cars were shockingly crowded, and as the train averaged about four miles an hour, we can not be said to have had a very good time. Still this slowness had its advantages and gave us a splendid opportunity for seeing the scenery and studying the habits of that curious animal the Emigrant (*genus Homo*).

I regret to say that this animal has few redeeming qualities. It is very quarrelsome in captivity. Its habits are not at all remarkable for cleanliness; its usual food being onions and cheese.

There is a monotony of scenery in Eastern Canada \* which surpasses even the monotony of the prairie. It consists of miles of forest—two burnt pines and one live one, sometimes varied by two live ones and one burnt or even three dead ones. However, the scenery at Thunder Bay, on the north shore of Lake Superior and its neighbourhood, is really very fine.

At Quebec we stopped off twelve hours, in the hope of dodging the emigrants; but we caught them up at St. Martin's, near Montreal: then we resigned ourselves to our fate.

But I will not dwell longer upon a painful subject. Sufficient to say that we finally arrived at our destination—Oaklake, about 200 miles west of Winnipeg—one Sunday, having been about a week on the journey from Halifax.

We chose Oaklake because I had a friend, W—, who had settled near there, who very kindly allowed us to stop at his farm on a very fair arrangement, *i.e.* we paid our share of the expenses.

## CHAPTER II.

### MANITOBA.

WHEN we arrived at Oaklake, we were met by some young Englishmen, friends of my friend W—'s. They took us to an hotel.

This is one of the most noticeable things about Canada. The smallest village, even when only boasting one store, usually has one or more hotels, and they are better than would be expected. They are boarding-houses, clubs, and saloons, or at least combine the three.

Next morning our friend volunteered to walk out with us

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\* Of course I only refer to the scenery on the Intercolonial Railway and Canadian Pacific Railway. That I have seen myself.—*Author.*

and show us the way to W——'s place. We carried guns, but did not succeed in shooting anything worth mentioning, to the great disgust of "Mars." However, we shot a few small birds, gofers, etc, the said gofers being small weasel-shaped animals; but they are rodents and very destructive to the crops.

The prairie here is broken by small clumps of trees (poplar and cotton-wood) and by ridges of sandhills; so it does not give the same ideas of size as the genuine "bald-headed" prairie which is met with further west.

We walked the seven miles which separated W——'s place from the railway, and arrived at his shanty about six o'clock. The shanty of Manitoba is small, usually built of lumber, and has rather the appearance of a toy house; but it is a palace compared to the "shack" which the inhabitants of the North-West territories live in.

W——'s shanty was a fair specimen, better than a great many; still it takes the "tenderfoot" some time to get used to sleeping on the floor, though in Manitoba the majority of settlers manage to get a bedstead and a mattress, which in the North-West are usually deemed superfluous.

The food in Manitoba is very much the same as in the North-West. People thinking they are well fixed if they can afford to lay in a stock of the following articles: Flour, tea, sugar, bacon, salt, potatoes, syrup. Milk and butter are usually considered luxuries. Of course we have to make our own bread, and the first few attempts would kill an ostrich; still, one manages to survive it and even gets to like it. However, any one going to this country must prepare to give up all luxuries.

The Spring had just opened on our arrival, and ploughing and seeding were in full swing.

We stopped at W——'s about two months, and there we learned to drive oxen. The only difficult part of driving them is the swearing. You must swear: they refuse to move if you do not, and it must be genuine profanity, no half and half swear-words. However, if a chap is industrious and really sets his mind to it, he will be able to swear pretty well in a month or two.

There was a large lake quite close to the farm, also a slough, which is a kind of marsh: both were full of duck. I managed to get about thirty ducks that spring, but did not get a goose, though there were a great many about; in fact, the farmers accused them of following up the drills and eating the wheat as fast as it was put into the ground.



The farmers have very large pieces of ploughing, some as much as 400 or 500 acres; still, they do not seem to make money; in fact, I never saw people so universally hard up in my life.

This is chiefly due to the mortgages which almost every farmer has upon his place, also to the great cost of machinery, which they buy upon time and which consequently keeps them down, as it is all they can do to pay the interest, and when they are ready to pay the principal the machine is worn out.

While at W——'s I had quite an exciting hunt after a pelican. I saw six big white birds swimming about 200 yards from the edge of the slough in front of the shanty. So I took my rifle and crawled down to the edge as near to them as I could, and lay down and took a 200 yards sight and fired. Five got up; one did not.

The five flapped slowly over my head. I lay on my back and fired at the leader. The bullet evidently went in front of them, for they turned and flew away in the opposite direction. They were the calmest, most self-possessed looking birds I ever saw; even the wounded one, who had his wing broken, did not seem to get at all excited. I sent "Mars" out to get him, and he waited till "Mars" got pretty close; then raised himself out of the water and brought his bill down on the top of "Mars'" head, causing him to disappear altogether; when he reappeared, he swam round two or three times in a circle, and then struck out for the opposite shore. Then I tried to go out. I waded in up to my waist, and the water was horribly cold—in fact, I would not have believed water could have been so cold without freezing; but the mud was so soft that I got scared and scrambled out. Then I remembered a small boat which was about a mile further down the slough. So I ran down as well as I could, with four hundred and eighty pounds of mud on one foot and two hundred and seventy on the other.

The boat, when I got there, was about the worst boat I have ever seen, and there was only one paddle, which weighed about six times as much as it should have done, and I did not then know how to use a single paddle. However, I was bound to get that pelican. So I shoved off and started paddling, first on one side and then on the other; but there was a strong north wind blowing right in my face, and every time I got the boat about six inches to one side, it would turn nearly round, till at last, when I was nearly going mad with rage, I drove the pelican into a kind of bay



of soft mud. Then I jumped out, armed with the paddle, and "Mars" came out and helped, so when the pelican went for "Mars," I tried to sneak up and kill it; then it would turn round and come for me with such an ugly look in its eye that I would turn and run; then "Mars" would go for it behind. At last it made a fearful stroke at "Mars," but he dodged, and its beak stuck in the mud, and as it was recovering itself I brought the paddle down on its head and killed it. Then I went round and picked up my boots which I had lost in the fray.

When we got it home we found it measured eight feet from tip to tip of its wings. It was a splendid bird—pure white, except the beak and legs, which were orange, and the tips of the wings, which were black.

There is no more glorious sight than a big flock of the birds, such as I saw in the fall of that year, flying in a long unbroken line. We counted over a hundred, and did not seem to have counted half. They were high up, but it was a bright, clear day, and you could see their white bodies and the black tips of their wings standing out against the bright blue sky.

One day while C—— and T—— were at W——'s, a young Englishman, named P—— G——d, introduced himself, and asked us whether we would care to join a tennis club which was starting in the neighbourhood. He told us that he had been appointed the committee for the district of "Sandhurst," which was a small settlement near there; besides being the committee he was also sec.-treasurer. We said we should be delighted. We then asked him to come in and have dinner. He came, and very sensibly did the cooking himself. He was one of the nicest fellows I met out in Canada, and had the best house in the neighbourhood. Shortly after this I went to work with a Mr. F——, who lived about five or six miles from W——'s place. I was working for my board only, but the work was not very hard. We got up about half-past five or six. Then, after I had learned, I used to milk two cows; then I would go and help F—— in anything he happened to be doing till twelve, when we had dinner. In the afternoon I had to milk the cows again and do what in that country we call "chores," which consist of chopping wood, feeding the stock, etc.

F—— was a carpenter and builder, and also did some boat-building and farming. His farm was on the shore of Oaklake, which is about four miles wide and four long. There was a narrow arm of the lake running up into his place, and as he

kept two or three boats I have had many a pleasant day paddling about with a gun, and getting a few flappers. While with F—— I helped him to build some shanties, and we also built a boat that summer.

I also learned to plough there, and it was while ploughing that I first saw a skunk. For a long time I had been wishing to see a skunk. I had often smelt them, but never seen one. They say that "it never rains but it pours," and in proof of that when I did see a skunk I saw no less than five all at once, three young ones and two old. They were trotting across the ploughing in front of me. They are pretty little animals about a foot long, without counting their big, bushy tail, and are jet black, with two broad white stripes running along their backs; but in spite of the innocence and prettiness of their appearance there is not a more terrible antagonist to encounter than a skunk when he is quarrelsome. Never shall I forget the first time I met one face to face. It was late one evening, and I was sneaking along stalking some mallards, when on looking down I saw, not six feet from me, a skunk. My knees knocked together, my hair stood on end. However, there was not a second to lose, so without waiting to put the gun to my shoulder, I fired both barrels at him, lifting him about four feet each shot. Then I turned and fled away to the house; on the way up I shot a small patch of long grass, taking it for a skunk—that is the worst of getting a bad scare. For about a week after that, at night, I would walk carefully round any stone or small piece of wood, or anything that looked at all black. However, that afternoon they trotted quietly away, and you bet I let them go. A skunk has only one weapon, but it is terrible; no dog will tackle one, once he has been "skunked." They have the power of ejecting a kind of fluid, which is the very essence of all the bad smells imaginable condensed. "Mars" got skunked, and for quite a month afterwards you could smell him at four or five yards, and yet he spent most of his time in the water: long afterwards you could smell him slightly when he got wet.

Gradually the summer grew old, and haying began. Haying in this country requires a good deal less labour than in England. All the cutting is done by a mower, which is capable of cutting up to ten acres per day. After it has been cut it is left on the field for about a day and then raked into windrows with a horse rake and left another day, when it is bunched with the horse rake, and then it is ready to haul in and stack. Haying lasted about three weeks, and then as

times were rather dull, it occurred to me to give a dance. So I told Mrs. F—— that if she would do the cooking I would supply the provisions. When this was agreed to the next thing was to find a room. However, there was a workshop outside, which had a good floor; so we cleared that out and washed the floor. It was rather small for a ball-room, being 20 feet by 16 feet, still people are used to that in those parts. Ice cream was easy to get, as F—— had put up a lot of ice the preceding winter; so we borrowed a freezer, and collected the cream for a few days, and there you are. I did not think it worth while to get programmes printed, so we wrote them out as follows:—

### McGUSTY CASTLE.

#### PROGRAMME.

- |                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. LANCERS.              | 9. SARATOGA LANCERS. |
| 2. VALSE.                | 10. VALSE.           |
| 3. VALSE.                | 11. POLKA.           |
| 4. HAYMAKERS.            | 12. RIPPLE.          |
| 5. POLKA.                | 13. SCHOTTISCHE.     |
| 6. JERSEY.               | 14. VALSE.           |
| 7. MILITARY SCHOTTISCHE. | 15. SIR ROGER.       |
| 8. VALSE.                | EXTRAS.              |



I shot fourteen ducks for the supper, and all the girls in the neighbourhood helped in the cooking: so we managed to have a good, if not a very stylish, supper.

About thirty people came together: a Member of Parliament, the Reeve of the town, and the family of the Chief Justice of Manitoba—in fact, quite the *elite* of the neighbourhood. A good deal of excitement prevailed as to where McG. Castle was; so we all adjourned out to see it, and found that “Mars” was using it as a kennel. Altogether we had a very good time, though the contrast between a log-house and evening dress was rather striking.

Shortly after the dance, harvest began. The crops that year, owing to the want of rains, were a dismal failure, many people only having from six to ten bushels per acre, hardly paying expenses.

I went and worked for P—— G—— for a short time while he was getting in his crop.

Then, after harvest was over, I came back and worked for F—— again, at 16 dollars per month, ploughing.

While I was ploughing, the geese began to come down.

They came in thousands, but are very hard to get near; but they used to let me get quite close to them when I was ploughing—in fact, they nearly drove me mad flying calmly round within fifty yards of me. However, I succeeded in shooting eight of them that fall: the big ones weigh up to 12 lbs. and get fearfully fat feeding on the stubble.

The first one I shot I killed with a rifle. They were in the habit of alighting to feed in a big stubble field, in the centre of which was a small clump of bushes. So one Sunday I went down and lay down in the bushes. Pretty soon the geese began to arrive, making as much row as a hundred packs of hounds, and the noise made by a flock of geese is very similar to that of a pack of hounds in full cry. They settled down all round me, some within twenty yards of me. I waited till they were pretty thick all round: then I sneaked out to try and get a shot; but my foot caught, and I stumbled forward, and they all got up. Then I lost my head and fired right into the flock, and, greatly to my surprise, one came down about 200 yards from where I was. I sent the dog for him: but he only had the tip of his wing injured, so that he could flap along for about 100 yards much faster than the dog could run; but he had to stop every 100 yards or so and rest. I watched them till they had gone about half a mile; then I saw "Mars" jump on the goose's back and drag it back. I had to wait quite a time, as he came along very slowly with his tail stuck straight up in the air, looking devilish proud.

This however is not the usual way of getting them. The best way is to go down to the lake shore to some point over which the geese are in the habit of flying; there you squat down on the soft mud and get the seat of your trousers beastly wet and cold, and then you yell and shout as much like a goose as possible, and with a little practice it is not hard to call down geese. If there are two people sitting out it is usual for one of them to ask the other to step out and act as a decoy. Presently you hear the geese coming towards you, and you redouble your yells. They answer back, and so you go on shouting at each other till they come within shot. I shot seven like that, but only picked up four; the other three were wounded, and a wounded goose can travel much faster than a dog in the soft mud which is round those prairie lake shores.

It takes a great amount of shot to bring a goose down. I have fired both barrels loaded with B B shot at a goose at about 40 yards, and knocked a lot of feathers out both

barrels, and yet he flew away. The other three I got by hiding behind stacks of grain.

The number of geese there at one time that fall was incredible. Some nights the sky would be black with them, when they had finished feeding, and were coming back to rest on the lake. They were there simply in thousands, but are very hard to shoot, as when feeding there are always some of them watching, and when sleeping they always keep out of shot off the shore, and never all go to sleep at once. In fact they would be the wisest of birds, if it was not for the row they make when flying, which always betrays their approach.

However, in November the lake froze up, and the geese, and indeed all birds, except snowbirds and prairie chicken (a kind of large grouse) left for the south, and the winter was upon us.



### CHAPTER III.

#### WINTER IN MANITOBA.

THE winter having set in in earnest, the first thing I did was to go up to Brandon, the nearest town to Oaklake, and invest in a set of furs—cap, coat, and mits, the mits being very like large baby's gloves.

Furs are a great advantage in that country as the wind out there will blow through the thickest woollen things; the only things which keep it out are fur or buckskin. Buckskin is not much worn in Manitoba, but a great deal in the North-West.

As soon as the snow came, wheels were done away with, of course, and sleighs came in. The wagon-boxes were fixed upon "bob" sleighs, a kind of double sleigh. Buggies, the usual rig of this country, were replaced by cutters, which are a very light kind of sleigh for one horse.

I learned to walk on snow-shoes that winter, but really

they were very little assistance. As owing to the excessive cold the snow falls in very fine particles, and as there is no thaw until towards the spring, it keeps fine and powdery almost all the winter and snow-shoes require a slight crust.

The winter in these countries is very monotonous. All there is to do is sitting over the stove and telling yarns.

Of course we had occasionally to go to the bush for a load of wood. It was distant about four miles, and it was when coming back with a load of wood that I first got my toes frozen. I happened to get off and walk, and felt that both my big toes seemed insensible and dead. But I did not realize they were frozen till we got home, when they began to thaw out on my going into a warm room. I did all I could to stop the pain, which is excruciating, putting coal oil on them, etc., but still they made me hop round and cuss, and were very sore for a few days. We then had, of course, to chop wood for the stoves. Sometimes it would be exciting if your hand was at all damp, and you happened to touch a piece of iron, as your hand would promptly stick to it. This very often happens when unhitching a team, as you are then liable to take off your mit if any strap happens to be stiff, as your hand is then probably warm and moist from working; and when after stamping round in the cold, struggling to get buckles, etc., undone, and finally your finger sticks to some piece of iron, and you have to pull the skin off to get away, you feel you could lie down on your back in the snow and scream with rage.

However, it's an ill wind that blows no one good, and these little accidents are intensely amusing to any one who happens to be looking on when they occur.

It was also while going for wood that I saw my first deer. He was standing upon a small sandhill, and let us drive up within 100 yards of him; then he turned and trotted slowly away. He looked very fine standing broadside on to us. He was a fine buck, a jumping deer, and had very fine horns for that kind of deer. It was too late to hunt him that night, as we had not a rifle with us, and next day it came on to blow a blizzard. I went out the day after, but he had probably travelled south-east before the blizzard. The blizzards in Manitoba are very bad, as there is practically nothing to break the force of the wind. A blizzard is not, as some people imagine, a bad snow-storm; it is simply a very strong wind, which blows all the light snow off the ground before it, and if there is the smallest crack in the logs or board of the house, which by-the-bye there frequently is in a bachelor's

house in Manitoba, it will find it, and in an incredibly short space of time will fill the house with snow.

It is a terrible thing to get caught in a blizzard, as it comes on with very little warning, and if you do not happen to be near a house you are very liable to get lost, as owing to the drifting snow you can only see a very few yards.

We started a dramatic club in Oaklake that year, which killed a certain amount of time rehearsing, etc. We played the usual old chestnuts, which, I believe, all amateur dramatic clubs start with, *i.e.*, "Our Boys," followed by the well-known farce, "Box and Cox," in which I took a part.

They took fairly well; but the inhabitants were not very particular. "Our Boys" was rather well acted, the farce moderately so. Any way they helped to pass the time. It was while performing this in a small town near Oaklake, called Verden, that I heard the following yarn, which an old-timer told us, and as it will, I think, prove of interest to students of natural history, I give it as nearly as possible in the gentleman's own words.

#### THE SIDE HILL GOWAGER.

"Say, boys, did any of you ever happen to strike a side hill gowager?" "No."

"Wall, of all the d——d rum critters I ever did see that's the darndest. I only saw one once and then I hadn't a d—— gun; but I chased it, and you can bet your life they can just git to 'beat three of a kind' when they're scared. You see, they live in the foothills, and as they do all their travelling on the slope of the hills they're built according, and I'll be eternally —— d—— if they haven't got one long hind leg and one short one and one long fore leg and one short one."

"Now, as I said, they can just about git along the slope of the hills, going one way, but they're darned poor hands at going straight up and down, and of course they can't turn round and go the other way."

"What?" "Why not head them off?"

"Wall, they aint quite so d—— helpless as that; you see they've got a darned long neck and they just screw their head round and go backwards just about as fast as they go forrard. The only way you can get them is for one man to get in front and the other behind and then you've got to close in on them pretty tarnation sharp as they can ever—lastingly make the earth fly and will be underground in about ten seconds."



"Ain't anyone going to put up the drinks?"

"Wall then I will. What yer goin to have?"

"I know not what the truth may be

"I tell the tale as was told to me."

I had very little to do with the Indians in Manitoba, but I met a few. They were Sioux, who had come into Canada after the great massacre in the States. There were also a few who had fought with "Sitting Bull" in the Custer affair. They are very dirty, and as they wear white men's old clothes for the most part, do not look nearly as picturesque as their Western brethren.

They live in the usual style and have a few ponies. They mostly use a small cart, called a Red River cart, when travelling, though some of them travel in the most extraordinary rigs, which I believe the Government supply them with. I have even seen them in buggies. However, as I said, I know very little about them, as I did not know any Sioux at all, so could not speak much to them. There are also a few Crees scattered about, and further east some Chippaways.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### *THE NORTH-WEST.*

† LEFT Oaklake for Calgary, where I had determined to go, on the 14th February, 1890, on one of the coldest days we had had that winter. We left at 8 o'clock p.m. My only companion for the first few miles was a very drunken individual who was asleep in a corner. I got lonely after a time, so went over and woke him up and talked to him. He had the most disjointed conversation I ever heard, and asked the most aimless questions. After a bit the conductor came in and told him that he had passed his station. That made him fighting mad, and he wanted to know "Why the ——" I did not wake him before. I had quite a lively time with him until we reached the next station, where the conductor put him out. Then I curled up and went to sleep.



Early next morning we passed Regina, the capital of the North-West territories; but it was still quite dark. About a dozen of the North-West Mounted Police got in here. They were under the command of a Sergeant, and were going to Calgary. Amongst them I recognised a young Scotch chap, whom I had known in Manitoba. There was also another young chap whom I knew; he, like a great many others, having failed for the army, and still wanting to wear a red coat, drifted into the police force. I put in the day pretty well, talking to them, and early next morning, about 5 a.m., arrived in Calgary.

Calgary is a very rising town, though the population is only 4000; still it possesses many advantages lacked by many much larger towns in England. It is beautifully situated at the junction of the Bow and Elbow rivers. It has a good system of water works, electric light, telephones, a well organised fire brigade, good hotels, etc., and considering that in 1880 the town site was a howling wilderness, or at least that there were only two or three log buildings, there the progress and the increase in the value of real estate have been simply marvellous, and there is no reason why it should not increase to the same extent again, especially as this year (1890) a new railway has been started to Edmington, which has reached the Red-deer River.

I did not know anybody in Calgary except the two mounted policemen whom I had travelled up with, so did not feel very much inclined to stop in town, so I determined to buy a horse and ride out to a Mr. M——, to whom I had a letter of introduction. His ranch was on the Bow, about fifty miles from Calgary. I found a horse that suited me, or at least whose price, 20 dollars, did. He was about 12 hands high, and weighed about 450 lbs. I should think (I stand about 6 ft. 2 in. and weigh about 12 stone and a half), and only possessed one eye, on which account I christened him Polyphemus. He was a genuine "cayeuse" light bay, with four white legs and a white face.

I mounted him and started about 12 o'clock. The snow was very deep, so the travelling was very difficult, and it was very cold, going down to about 40 degrees below zero; but I must mention that that winter was unequalled for duration and severity in the memory of the oldest white inhabitants, *i.e.*, for about 10 years.

I only rode about 14 miles that afternoon and put up at a stopping house for the night. Next morning I started on across country. The snow was fearfully deep, and Poly-

phemus had all he could do to get on at all. However, we had not gone many miles before we passed the house of a Mr. D——, who came out and very kindly asked me to come in and stay a few days. This was very kind, considering that he had never seen me before. I stopped with him three days and had a very good time.

There were a lot of dead cattle opposite to his place; for, strange to say, cattle do sometimes die, though this will probably be news to the shareholders in the ranching companies, and, as a consequence of the dead cattle, there were a lot of cayotees over there too. Cayotees are a kind of wolf which inhabits the prairie. We went over one day to try and hunt them, but it was not a success. Next day two four-horse teams came along bringing coal from Calgary to the industrial schools at high river, and as that was in my way I travelled on down with them. I tied Polyphemus behind and we took it in turns to walk ahead and find the trail. We got to the industrial schools, about 14 miles, late that night, but had to leave one waggon and hitch all the horses to the other. I stopped at the industrial school that night and went on next day. Next day I was passing a ranch belonging to Mr. B——; he, too, asked me in. He was the most good natured chap I met in the North-West. I stopped at his ranch about a week and had a first-rate time, he had been in the country ten years and said that he had never seen anything like the cold, or so much snow before. He was, and indeed so was everybody else I met, expecting a "chinook" to come every day; a "chinook" is a warm wind which blows from the mountains, and which takes the snow away every now and then.

But the chinook did not come, and so the cattle kept on dying and hay kept on going up in price, and the ranchers kept on stamping round and cussing till about the following April.

It was at B——'s that I first became acquainted with the Blackfeet. B—— himself can talk Blackfoot like a native.

There were three old squaws who had made a permanent camp near his ranch; they used to do washing, etc., for him, and he in return used to supply them with some flour, tea, etc.

If they had chosen to go on the stage they would have made their fortunes acting the three witches in "Macbeth."

There was also camped near there a chief called "Low Horn" and about three others. These people, and a great many other Blackfeet I came to know very well afterwards.

At the end of a week I went on down to M——'s. I stopped

there about another week. Then on my way back I stopped with B—— again for a few days, then proceeded into town, as I had to meet a friend in there. I sold Polyphemus.

As soon as the snow thawed I left town and went out and stayed with a young Englishman, H——. I made his shack my headquarters, as I wanted to ride round and see the country so as to know exactly where to locate when I started my ranch. I then bought a horse.

I lived with him about two months, and rode around the country and looked at it. The horse I got suited me very well; he was very fast, but too high strung to be much good for stock.

I also got a Mexican saddle and riding outfit.

Once I rode about 25 miles south-west to see some land, but I got lost and had to sleep out that night, and it rained hard all night and next morning. I let the horse find his way back.

I stopped at different ranches that summer, working for my board, and learning how to run a ranch. But I stopped most of the time at B—— ranch.

Life on a ranch is rough but enjoyable, perfectly free, you can wear any clothes you like, and do anything without bothering about who will see you.

But then, you have usually to sleep on the floor with just a blanket under you.

There was always a lot going on at B——'s ranch, breaking horses, etc. The way they break horses out there is very different from the methods used in the old country. The horses are driven into a corral, which is a circular enclosure, with a fence from seven to eight feet high round it, then having settled who is going to ride and what colt is to be broken, the next thing is to catch him. There are two ways of doing this; the simplest is to throw the rope round his neck and choke him down. The more scientific is to rope him by the front legs and jerk him over at once. Having arranged these preliminary measures the man who is to do the roping steps forward and neatly throws the lariat round the horse's front feet, then hangs on to the rope till the horse comes down, when somebody runs up and sits on its head; a hecamore is then fixed on and it is let up. It is then dragged round by the hecamore till it is considered "halter broke"; the next thing is to get the saddle on; this being done some "bronco buster" climbs on; of course the bronco bucks, but its rider soon pounds all that out of it, and after two or three rides it will be quite broken. At least that is the way it

should be done, but I am sorry to say it is usually a good deal more complicated than that.

When for example some people who are not quite so experienced start they do things differently. The boss says to one of the men: "George" (or whatever his name may be), "will you do the roping?" "Don't mind if I do," says he. He then gets his lariat and swaggers into the middle of the corral, carefully coils the rope up in his hands, gives the noose a preliminary swing and says he is ready. The horses are driven round; he runs round too, swinging the noose violently round his head. It knocks against the snubbing post in the centre of the corral and curls round his neck, and he throwing it at the same time, nearly gauks his head off. Then he stamps round and blasphemes till his eyes stick about three inches out of his head, and two of the mares faint and have to be carried out.

Then G. has to be untangled and the business starts again. He swings his rope more carefully this time, throws, and hits the horse across the knees. Then he curses the lariat, says he would have got him that time only the noose did not open. Next shot he misses again. Then an Indian squaw, who has wandered up in the meantime and is looking through the side of the corral, remarks: "Napiquoin moxinum" (white man no good). G. nearly has apoplexy at this; the squaw placidly grins at him.

At last, just as no one is expecting it, G. does catch the bronco by the fore legs. The colt plunges round the corral; G. flies round after him, hanging on to the end of the rope and yelling, "Come on, you d— fools, and hang on; don't stand there like a lot of boiled owls," and everybody else too much surprised to think of stopping still, tears round after him.

At last the bronco is thrown, and after he has been halter broken is saddled. Then comes the momentous question, who is to ride?

It then turns out that nearly everybody has something the matter with him. It is at times like this that one finds out what fearful and noxious diseases your friends, whom you had probably considered perfectly healthy, are suffering from.

I myself say that I could not risk my life, as if some dozen other people were to die there would be no male left of my race or name. Everybody jeers at this, saying that if they were not suffering from these terrible maladies they would enjoy nothing more than a ride on that particular horse.

At last some benighted idiot volunteers to ride and climbs

on. The bronco bucks backward, forward, sideways, and round in a circle, his back arched and his head sticking out between his hind legs, while the poor devil on his back clings to the horn of the saddle and looks as if he would give all he possessed and a darned sight more to be sitting peacefully on the prairie. Yet, though the bronco is doing everything he knows to help him to do this, and though all he has to do is to let go, he does not do it.

We stand round and grin and shout, "Stay with him," "Hang to him," "Stick your spurs in," and other remarks of the same kind to him.

At last the bronco, getting tired of bucking, starts to run, and he and the herder, who is also mounted, and who is supposed to follow and see that the bronco does not run over a cut bank or get into trouble, disappear across the prairie.

I have been on a bucking bronco once or twice, and it is the most fearful sensation I ever felt. After you have been on a few minutes you don't know which is your head and which your heels, or what your name is, or how old you are; all you feel is an indistinct impression that one end of your spine is sticking out about four inches and bumping against the saddle, and that the other is sticking about the same distance into your brain and is working about in there.

Cattle of course are the most important things in the North-West. They are turned out on the prairie all summer, and "Rounded up" in the spring and fall, in order to brand the calves, etc. Some ranches do not even feed them in the winter. Branding the calves is nearly as exciting as breaking horses. The cattle, who only see a man perhaps twice a year, are naturally as wild as deer, and it is very dangerous to go near them on foot.

I remember once I had brought in some fifty head of tame cattle and put them in the corral, and knowing them to be quite tame I tied my horse outside the corral and went in on foot. But there happened to be a range cow in there which I had not noticed. I wanted to cut out some cattle that were required and to let the rest go. I was just opening the gate, when on looking round I saw that cow within three feet of me, and coming for me "red-eyed." I skipped out, and ran round that corral faster than I had ever run before, with the cow just behind me. The worst of it was another chap was looking on, roaring with laughter, and shouting, "Run, you long-legged devil," "Two to one on the cow," etc. At last I made a jump for the side of the corral and got over. I went in on a horse next time.

There are two ways of branding. One way the cattle are driven through a kind of narrow passage, called a shoot, one panel of which can be pressed down on the cattle. This holds them, and the brand is then applied. It is an iron which is hot enough to burn into the skin.

The other way is for two men to ride into the corrals, one of whom ropes the calf by the neck, the other by its hind legs. They then throw it, and another man sits on its head, whilst a fourth brands it.

Another exciting kind of work is "cutting out," *i.e.*, separating certain cattle from the band. You ride into the band and follow the one you want to get out, and gently drive it out of the band. As soon as you have got it out, it naturally wants to get back—you have got to keep between it and the herd. It will start to run, and those cattle can run nearly as fast as a horse, then will suddenly stop and turn. Your horse does likewise, and so on until you get them separated from the herd.

The cattle out there are very much the same as in the old country, the usual kind of bulls turned out with them being Durhams, Herefords and Poled Angus. The most noticeable thing about the cattle is that only about one cow in three can boast of more than six inches of tail, the rest having been frozen off. It looks very funny to see a cow trying to flick a fly off the end of her nose with a six-inch tail.

The flies in this country are, to use a western phrase, "a caution to snakes." Mosquitoes there are in thousands; but they are too well known to need any mention. But there is another variety out here called a bulldog. He is about the size and has very much the appearance of the drone bee. He is a most bloodthirsty villain, he will bite a piece out the size he wants, fly on to the nearest fence post and eat it. He very seldom gets a good chance to bite a piece out of a man. But between him and the mosquitoes the cattle have a lively time.



## CHAPTER V.

### *SPORT IN THE NORTH-WEST.*

IN this book I will say nothing on the subject of big game. The ordinary settler has neither the time nor inclination to hunt them.

Big game there undoubtedly is within no very great distance of Calgary. Grizzly and mountain sheep (big horns) in the mountains, elk and other kinds of deer, also mountain lions in the foothills, but I had nothing to do with them myself, and so will say nothing about them.

The best fishing is to be got in the foothills. It being no unfrequent occurrence for a couple of fellows who care to devote a whole day to it to catch sixty, or even more, large trout in a day.

I myself, however, never fished for more than an hour or two, and then it was for the pot.

Some people use a good trout rod and a cast of flies, the same as in England. I, however, preferred to do at Rome as the Romans do, so when I started I cut down a young tree, to the end of which, I tied a string, to the end of which again I fastened a large hook, without gut, then my tackle was prepared.

The next thing is bait, there is a very large kind of grasshopper which inhabits the prairie, and which makes the best of bait.

The pursuit of this creature is far more exciting and more difficult than that of the trout.

You walk along with your eyes bent on the ground till one of these creatures rises and flies away a few yards, making a great crackling with its wings. You then rush at it, hit it a crack over the head with your hat and knock it down and collar it, then hit it another crack with a club and kill it. When you have a sufficient number of these creatures you can start to fish.

You go down to the water, fix a grasshopper to the hook and drop it in and let it float gently down until a trout grabs



it, then you give it a great yank which jerks the trout out over your head on to the bank behind you.

Not very sportsmanlike perhaps, and yet I passed some very pleasant afternoons fishing like this last summer. You are among some of the most glorious scenery, as I don't believe there is any scenery to compare with the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, and then there is the pleasant feeling that there is probably not another human being within some miles of you

There is very good chicken shooting near Calgary.

I had a very fair day's shooting on the 1st of September. Though we did not get any shooting till after twelve o'clock, and were home again by half-past six.

There were three of us out, but only two were shooting at one time as we had a buckboard with us, and one of us had to drive that. We had a setter out and a young pup which was being broken, I did not bring out my dog - "Mars."

H. and I were shooting first: we struck three birds which rose to him, and he bagged two of them. I then followed the other bird, and when it rose bagged that. We then tramped along until two o'clock, only getting one long shot. About two o'clock we had some very lively shooting, getting about ten birds altogether. Then we went in to dinner at a farmer's. After dinner we started again. I was driving, and got in amongst a covey at the top of a hill and bagged two brace: the others also had some good sport. We then turned and shot towards home, bagging a few more brace on the way back. Altogether we got thirty-seven head, not counting a large hawk that I shot. A prairie chicken is a very fine bird, very like the common grouse, only larger and of a greyish colour. It makes very good eating.

H. and I had another very good afternoon's shooting. We started about half-past three o'clock, and rode with our guns slung in front of us. We used to get off and shoot when we struck a covey. We got twelve chicken and two ducks between us that afternoon. Towards evening we rode right in amongst a covey, and I, greatly to everybody's surprise, my own included, got a right and left off the horse at two birds, one of which rose on my right, the other on my left, and each of whom flew in a different direction.

About the end of September I and two other fellows started on an expedition up to Red-deer, a small settlement on the Red-deer River, about 95 miles north of Calgary. We took guns with us and had some very good shooting on the way: we also took "Mars." We had three horses, two tents, which



we packed on to a democrat, which is a four-wheeled rig. Two of us drove in the democrat, the other one rode : we took the riding in turns.

We left Calgary about half-past twelve, on a very cold day for September, and travelled 22 miles that day. After we got about five miles from Calgary we left the last house behind, and travelled on along the Edmonton trail across the most dreary-looking "bald-headed" prairie I ever saw. About half-past four or five we reached a "stopping house," near which we camped, as we should have had to go on about 12 miles before striking more water. The grading for the new Edmonton railway was about three miles west of us. We pitched the tent, picketed the horses, carried everything into the tent, fixed up the stove, and then found that we had forgotten to bring any wood. Now we had had nothing to eat since leaving Calgary, and it is simply wonderful how quarrelsome the most good-natured people get when hungry, so, of course, we quarrelled and cussed each other pretty freely ; but at last we found a little wood which had been left by some former campers, the place we were camped in being a favourite half-breed camping ground. So we cooked supper, and after supper we sat round and smiled, and we all talked to "Mars" and made him feel perfectly happy until he went and sat near the stove and rested his tail against it, then he gave a yell and rushed through the side of the tent and scared the horses.

Then H—— brought out his banjo and sang. Amongst others, he sang this song, to the tune of "Life on the Ocean Wave" :

#### LIFE IN A PRAIRIE SHACK.

Oh it's life in a prairie shack,  
When the rain begins to fall ;  
It drips through the mud on the roof,  
And the wind comes through the wall.

*Chorus*—And the tenderfoot cusses his luck,  
And feebly murmurs ah !  
The blooming country's a fraud,  
And I want to go home to ma.

Then they set him chopping wood,  
When it's forty-five below ;  
He aims a blow at a log,  
And amputates a toe.

*Chorus*—And the tenderfoot, etc.



He mounts his fiery cayeuse,  
And thinks he will flourish around ;  
But the buzzard head starts to buck,  
And lands him on the ground.

*Chorus*—And the tenderfoot, etc.

etc., etc.

We then unrolled our blanket and made our bed.

H—, "Mars" and myself slept in one tent, G— in another little A tent (McGusty Castle).

In a few minutes we were in bed, and nothing broke the silence except the horses munching the grass.

Next morning, we started about half-past eight, having used the last piece of wood to cook breakfast. After we had gone about five miles the road began to snake across the railway grade, and we saw some grading camps. The first house we came to was a stopping house, about 15 miles from our camping ground. Near there I met a Stony Indian, who told me there were lots of duck on a small lake which we were going to; and just beyond there we "struck a bonanza," that is to say, we found a sack containing a lot of wood neatly cut up, and a ploughshare. We agreed that as we did not want the ploughshare, we would leave that, which we accordingly did, taking the wood and the sack with us. We agreed that the man who had lost it, if he came back would think that we were very honest thieves. We moved on a few miles farther and stopped for dinner. We did not unpack, but lighted a fire on the ground and cooked "slapjacks," a kind of pancake, but made only with flour, baking powder and water. We rested an hour, then went on about five miles past another stopping house, and then we left the Edmonton trail, and struck out across the prairie for some lakes that lay north-east. We steered by the compass, as, of course, there was no other way of steering, and none of us had ever been there before. We had to travel slowly, as the prairie where there are no trails is very poor travelling. H— was riding ahead, and he came to a small coulee, and shouted to us to bring a gun as he saw a badger sitting there. As he shouted, an eagle got up within twenty yards of him and flew away. About an hour after that we came to a creek. We stopped there and gave the horses a drink, while H— rode on. I walked along the creek to see if I could find a place to cross, and shot three ducks. H— came back and told us that the lakes were only three miles further on; so we crossed the

creek and drove to them. We camped on the west shore of the biggest one.

Next day G—— went for some wood with the team about ten miles north, and H—— and I went shooting, but did not get much—only some fifteen ducks between us. We met a half-breed that day who was hunting horses.

That night we got rather a scare. During supper "Mars" rushed out two or three times and chased something, probably a kit fox. After supper we went to bed and to sleep. I was awakened by H——, who made a jump over me to the door. I asked him what was the matter. He said that he was lying half-asleep when he saw something, which he took to be a man's arm, reach in and take out a gun: he made a jump at it and found it was "Mars." I asked what the dickens he thought the dog could want with a gun. He said he didn't know, but supposed he wanted to shoot a horse; anyway he would hate, he said, to be round when the dog was fooling with a gun. Then we blinked at each other, and were just going to sleep, when we heard one of the horses neighing; and as it kept on as if calling for the others, we got scared and went out; and, sure enough, there was only one horse there: so we woke up G——, and took our guns and roamed round the prairie with nothing on but a flannel shirt. We found the horses, which had broken their picket ropes and strayed off about half-a-mile. We could not help laughing at each other: we looked so cold and miserable standing round in that light attire and each armed with a shot-gun.

We stayed one more day after that; then started on for Red-deer. We left about 20 ducks behind and brought on about the same amount. On the way over we shot some chicken. One covey I saw and walked up to it and put them up before shooting. G—— asked why I did not shoot them sitting. I said it was more sport to let them rise. He said "Oh, d——n the sport that comes in when you're picking them up;" and certainly there is great sport in picking a lot up when you are hungry.

A little before we got to Lone Pine, we began to see bluffs of trees, which got thicker till we got to Red-deer, where there is a lot of timber. We camped one day between the Lone Pine and Red-deer. We got to the latter place about 12 o'clock, and borrowed a wagon to get our things across the river, as we were afraid they would get wet in our rig. Here also we gave away most of our duck and chicken. We got across the Red-deer safely. It is fine broad stream, not quite so swift as the Bow. We travelled on over a very rough

road, through the brush to a place called Burnt Lake. We camped near a sheep ranch on the lake. After supper H—— and I went up to see the people at the ranch. We sat down and talked; they told us that the year before last six black bears had been killed on that lake.

We told them that we had a man eight-feet-four down in the camp, whom we used to curl round the tent to keep off snakes. They told us they knew a man who had climbed up a tree after a lynx and killed it up there with his hands. We had nothing to beat that, so we adjourned.

Next morning we moved camp about three miles to where there was a small stream running into the lake.

We camped at an old Cree camping ground; they had left a lot of teepee poles piled there. There was also an Indian "sick house" there. These sick houses are oblong-shaped constructions of willow stick, bent over and interlaced, just large enough to hold a man, in which the sick Indian is placed and in which he takes a kind of vapour bath. We camped here some days; so built a regular fire-place in which we might cook bannock, etc.

In a few days we started again for home, crossed the Red-deer in our own rig. Whilst crossing we saw a half-breed freighting outfit crossing too. It consisted of three waggons and 16 Red River carts. There were only three drivers with them—a man and his wife in the first waggon, and two young men, one about 16, the other 18; they were mounted. We came down the same way we went up, and came again to the three small lakes. We stopped there two days and then had to come down to Calgary as we were played out of grub. We had rather better sport this time. I got 12 ducks at one point in about half-an-hour; but the shooting was not at all good, as we had gone up about a month too early and the northern duck had not come down. The day we started from the lakes, the weather, which up till now had been glorious, broke and we had to start in a kind of sleeting rain and a high wind; however, we got on all right and camped next night at the same place, 22 miles from Calgary. We finished all the provisions that night and started next morning and drove into town; we got there about two o'clock.

Thus ended the most enjoyable fortnight I ever spent. Perhaps the best sport to be had on the prairie is the cayotee hunting.

The cayotee is a kind of wolf which lives on the prairie. It is a grey coloured, long-legged kind of creature, and very fast. The best way of hunting them is with greyhounds or Scotch deerhounds, as these dogs are almost as fast as a horse, and

any other kind of dog would be left behind. Of course out on the prairie there are no hedges or jumps of any kind ; it is just a fast gallop all through. A full-grown cayotee will give you a splendid run of four or five miles sometimes, and will often turn and stand off the dogs when overtaken.

It is curious the wonderful way in which a bronco will avoid stepping into badger holes, even when going at full gallop. In some places the prairie is simply covered with holes and yet one very seldom sees a badger.

Cowboys sometimes catch the cayotees with a lariat ; but a cayotee is a very hard thing to rope, as even when you shy the noose round him he wriggles through somehow.

The buffalos are now practically extinct, but at one time they must have been there in enormous numbers, as you cannot now ride any distance without seeing several heads and skeletons lying on the prairie, and you can still see their tracks worn deeply into the ground. You can also see their wallows—circular hollows about two feet deep in the centre and five feet across.

These wallows were made by the bulis when the flies were bad ; they would then lie down on their side and work themselves round till they had made a soft, cool place to lie in.

The principal animals on the prairie which are commonly seen are—antelope, jumping deer, lynx, cayotee and badger.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *BLACKFOOT INDIANS OF NORTH-WEST.*

**P**ROBABLY no race of savages has been so differently described as the North American Indian. Nothing more different could be imagined than Cooper's noble Redman, and the description given by Mark Twain, and the modern American writer. Yet of the two, I think Cooper's description is by far the most life-like. It is certainly fanciful and poetic. Still compared to some of his other characters, it is not more unnatural.

I decidedly think his character of "The Skimmer of the Seas," more unlife like than his "Last of the Mohicans." Almost everyone has read his books at one time or another; consequently, they expect the Indian to be almost divine, and finding that he is a very ordinary individual, they are disappointed, and fly to the opposite extreme and accuse him of being utterly useless and objectionable. The average American simply says, "Injuns is Pizen," and wonders why the Government supports and feeds such a lot of idle vagabonds, forgetting that the Government made treaties with them at a time when it was not strong enough to drive them out by force. However, that has nothing to do with my personal experiences of the Blackfoot Indians. I always found them a very quiet, cheerful, simple-minded people, and quite as honest as their white neighbours on the average. There were, of course, some black sheep.

They are called "bucks," "squaws," and "papooses" according to their sex and ages.

The bucks are tall, slimly made, and rather fine looking men, nearly all good runners and horsemen, and some of them good enough shots with a rifle.

The squaws are shorter, thicker set, and, as a rule, uglier than the men, though I have seen some who were decided exceptions to this rule. One hears a great deal about the way the Indians make their wives do all the work. This is not really so. Before the white man took his country, the Indian lived by hunting, and in consequence was away all the day. The squaws stayed at home and did the cooking, drew water, etc., and no one who had tried would say that that was harder work than hunting. Now, of course, the white man has driven the game from the country, and the Indians are confined to their reserves and rationed: consequently the occupation of the bucks is gone; the squaws, however, still have their same occupations.

The papooses, or children, are lively, cute-looking little things, with twinkling black eyes; they usually begin to ride at the age of five.

Their dress before the advent of the white man was composed of skins, and they still have a very good though slow way of tanning skin. Now it is composed mostly of blanket and cotton, though they still have in most cases an elaborately beaded outfit of buckskin for state occasions, such as "pow-wows," etc. A squaw once showed me a dress for which she said she had given a horse.

The dress of a "Buck" now-a-days usually consists of a



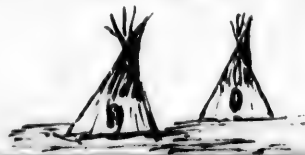
cotton shirt, a breech cloth round their loins, and a pair of long blanket leggings reaching up to their waist and fastened to their belts; these usually have a wide flap left at the seam; over all they usually wear a blanket, and they have a very dignified way of folding that about them; they wear their hair long, and occasionally sport a feather in it. They are very fond of having the skins of ermin or mink hanging to their blankets, and usually wear several necklaces of beads. Some of the older bucks are able to wear scalps, of which they are, of course, remarkably proud; some of the younger braves being unable to obtain these in these days of effete civilization, wear horse hair.

One never sees an Indian going barefoot; even the smallest papooses wear little moccasins. These moccasins are a sort of shoe made of soft buckskins, fitting close to the foot. Those of the bucks are elaborately beaded; those of the squaws usually plain.

The squaws wear a long loose kind of robe, reaching below the knees, made usually of thin cotton; round their waists they have a leather girdle, about three inches wide, and covered either with beads or brass-headed nails. They also wear short leggings, reaching only just above the knee and frequently showing the bare legs when the wind lifts their dress, which is extremely painful to a modest man like myself. They wear moccasins, and over all a blanket; neither they nor the bucks wear hats nor vary their custom for the winter; they are extremely hardy, and do not seem to suffer much from the cold, even when it is 40 degrees below zero. The men, it is true, do sometimes wear a soft felt hat, but it is solely for ornament, and they usually cut the crown out. The papooses, according to their sex, dress exactly like their elders in miniature.

The dress of all Indians is composed of the brightest colors they can get; they are not, however, glaring, as they usually have a neutral shade of dirt. The squaws usually show considerable skill and taste in the beading which they work; altogether they look very picturesque.

Their dwellings are pointed tents called tepees. These tepees are by far the best, and most convenient kind of tent I have ever seen; there are no ropes to break one's neck over, no pegs to come out in the middle of the night and let the wind in; and perhaps their greatest advantage is that they will stand a considerable amount of wind without blowing down; they are also very easy to put up. They are pitched as follows: Three poles are tied together near



the top and set up; then other poles are laid against the forks of these, so as to form a circle, their bases being about two feet apart; on these canvas is spread, which is fastened down in front by skewers; an opening is then left at the top for the smoke to get out, and another round hole for a door, over which a blanket is spread on two sticks. There is a sort of dado round the edge, which greatly increases the warmth. A small fire burns in the middle of the floor, and the tepees are always warm, even in mid-winter. The Indians lounge round the edge of the circle, or lean against reclining chairs; these chairs are very simple of construction, being simply back, the ground acting as seat.

In these tents an Indian family will live, and apparently live very happily, his dogs lying outside, and his cayenses (ponies) graze round, never wandering far from camp. An Indian is a perfect hand at camping out, and naturally loves wandering about. Anyone who, like me, has camped out on the lonely prairie, far from the haunts of man, can hardly imagine any more perfectly enjoyable life than that, minus such drawbacks as the tent blowing down, not being able to find wood or water, or the horses breaking their picket ropes and straying off about ten miles and then refusing to be caught. These little things never happen to an Indian. Therefore I do not think the Indians will ever turn into ordinary hard-working farmers, at least not until that time when "the lion will lie down with the lamb." The nearest approach to it that they make is horse-breeding, and I certainly think the Government might help to make them a great deal more prosperous by supplying them with a good stallion on each reserve, as at present their ponies are small, owing to the miserable little native stallions they have to keep.

The Indian tents add greatly to the picturesqueness of the landscape, as they are beautifully shaded, being dark brown at the top where the smoke escapes, and gradually merging into yellow near the bottom. Some of them have grotesque figures of men and animals painted on them, which give them quite an ancient Egyptian appearance.

The Indian horses, or "cayenses," are scrubby little animals from 12 to 14 hands, of some of the most unearthly colours, mostly extraordinary kinds of piebald, with greyish blue eyes, which give them an uncanny look. But small and ugly though they are, they have nevertheless a wonderful power of endurance, and can travel immense distances on very little food. The Indians break them in when mere



colts, which would in a great measure account for their size; this is also due to the early age at which the mares have foals, and most of all to inbreeding.

The dogs are ugly-looking curs, crossed many people say with the cayotees, or prairie wolves, and I should think their ancestor was probably a cross between a badger and hyena, but of this I have no proof.

The dogs do their share of the transport, dragging small loads on a construction of poles called "travoys."

The travoys are formed of two poles, fastened together near their points, with cross pieces in the middle, the fork fits on to a kind of saddle and the ends trail behind. Travoys are used for both horses and dogs, and are the only kind of cart used amongst the Blackfeet. Both, "squaws and bucks," ride the same way, one leg on each side, and use very short stirrups, which contrast forcibly with the long ones used by the cowboys.

Another noticeable thing is that they mount on the off side.

Indians seem to treat their animals very well, and never over-ride a horse.

In fact, I do not think they are a more cruel people than the uneducated white man; they always seem fond of and good to their children.

I was always struck with the similarity, rather than the dissimilarity between them and most other people; they are a fairly intelligent people, far more so than the average English agricultural labourer, who has usually no ideas outside a radius of five miles from his own village.

It is a complete mistake to imagine that Indians have no sense of humour. I think it is as much developed in them as in the average Englishman.

I remember one old chief, who told us with great amusement how they had some years ago scalped a whisky-trader. Now this gentleman had no hair on the top of his head, but had a good supply on his chin, so they had to scalp him there. Rather a grim joke for the whisky-trader. I remember another time a friend of mine got his buckskin "mits" wet (mits are made like baby gloves), and put them in the oven to get dry; he forgot about them, and shortly afterwards made up a hot fire. Now it is one of the peculiarities of buckskin that when scorched it will turn black and shrivel up, so when my friend remembered them and went to take them out, they would have been a tight fit for a child of five. The same old Indian had wandered in to warm himself, and when he saw those little black objects appear he nearly chuckled himself

into a fit, and some months afterwards I met him again and he was still enjoying that joke.

Indians are always very reserved amongst strangers; but when at home they, especially the squaws, relax, chatter and laugh.

I am sorry to say that the morality of the squaws is almost *nil*.

Of the Indians' religion I know nothing personally. From what I have read it seems a logical enough belief. They say that as the world is full of evil, it must be governed by an evil spirit, for no good one would permit evil, but there is also some good which argues that there is a good spirit, too. They believe that they must worship the evil spirit, or he will persecute them; but they say what good is it worshipping the good spirit, for, of course, he will do his best anyway. There is a Roman Catholic mission amongst the Blackfeet, which is doing a good work, and has a large industrial school for them.

Indian names strike the stranger as slightly peculiar, when translated. They are usually given them only when they have done something to distinguish themselves. Thus, a good runner is called "deerfoot," "running horse," or something that way; but some others, as that of one rather good-looking squaw called, "The woman with the big gun," are unique. Also that of a buck called, "Tried to fly, but could not."

They used to call me "Splitoan," which means a tall, fine-looking and inexpressibly handsome young man. Another fellow translated it "a longlegged silly-looking son of a gun," but I don't think it means that.

I did not like the name much, as it led to the fellows on the ranch calling me spittoon.

I do not know anything about the Government of the Indians, and can give no statistics to show whether they are dying out or not, but I should think they will never actually die out, though I believe that a pure-blooded Indian will soon be a thing of the past, and that the Indian of the future will be a half-breed, owing to the loose morals of the squaws.



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